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Weinberger Details Soviet Weapons Deployment

By JAMES GERSTENZANG, Times Staff Writer

WASHINGTON—The Soviet Union has pushed ahead with its deployment of new strategic weapons, modernization of older ones and protection of their missile silos against attack, Pentagon officials said Tuesday in their annual assessment of Soviet military developments.

"They have more weapons of higher quality and higher capability than a year ago, Defense Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger said.

But many of the Soviet advances outlined by Weinberger and portrayed in a 156-page book—featuring charts, maps, photographs and an accompanying videotape—parallel U.S. developments or, in some cases, indicate Soviet efforts to catch up with the United States.

According to the Pentagon, the

Soviet Union over the last year brought its deployment of mobile, single-warhead, intercontinental SS-25 missiles to 70. In addition, officials said that Soviet SS-24 missiles, capable of carrying 10 warheads about 6,000 miles—and roughly equivalent to the American MX missile scheduled to be deployed later this year—are expected to become operational in 1986.

The Pentagon, citing other Soviet weapons advances, has found that:

—Additional strategic ballistic missile submarines in the Typhoon and Delta IV classes, each capable of sending nuclear warheads to targets about 5,000 miles away, have been launched from hidden underwater launch sites. A new class of Soviet missile submarine is

likely to be deployed in the 1990s, the report said. Similarly, the Reagan Administration has requested funding for a new class of subs.

—Additional Russian Blackjack bombers, capable of carrying the new, nuclear-armed AS-15 cruise missile, which has a range of about 1,800 miles, have been produced for flight testing. A senior Pentagon official equated the airplane with the new B-1 bomber, which, flying at 1.6 times the speed of sound, is slightly slower than the Russian plane.

The official, speaking only on the condition that he not be identified, said that after a late start in developing low-flying, high-speed cruise missiles, the Soviets have "come on like gangbusters." He said they will soon be deploying "their answer to our Tomahawk," a cruise missile already deployed at sea.

—The supersonic SU-27 "Flanker" fighter-interceptor has become operational. Much of its design was said to have been copied from the Air Force's top-of-the-line F-15.

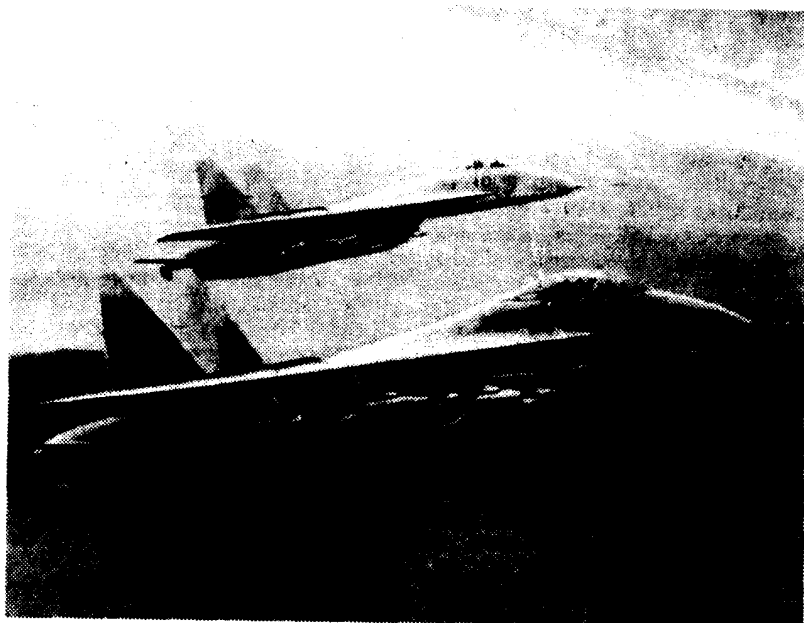
—A 65,000-ton aircraft carrier—larger than an earlier model but two-thirds the size of the largest U.S. carriers—has been launched. Sea trials, however, are not expected to take place until late in the decade.

—Additional SAM-10 surface-to-air missiles, with some defense capabilities against cruise missiles, have been deployed.

Weinberger said that a new generation of the SS-18 missile, the largest in the world, is nearing flight tests and will be deployed in "greatly hardened silos" to protect them from attack.

In reviewing Soviet air power, the report downgraded the range of the Soviet Backfire bomber by 14% as a result of reassessed intelligence, the senior Pentagon official said.

Overall, Weinberger said, "Soviet modernization has not abated. Based on current trends, our projections for the '90s give us no reason to feel that we can rest in our effort to prevent the Soviets from achieving a very significant, exploitable, military advantage."



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Sketch of the Soviet Union's SU-27 "Flanker" fighter.